

# The Redhead Gazette

2000

PROMOTING THE GOALS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE HORICON NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE AND THE LEOPOLD WETLAND MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## IMPROVING THE HORICON MARSH ECOSYSTEM

By Patti Meyers, Refuge Manager

Horicon National Wildlife Refuge (Horicon NWR) staff recently participated in a large-scale effort to improve the Horicon Marsh ecosystem by eradicating carp from the marsh. Phase one involved a winter chemical treatment to kill as many carp as possible under the ice. Phase two is currently underway: removing dead carp and restocking beneficial fish to the marsh.

### Improvement Efforts

Now that the ice has thawed, and we have open water on the marsh, carp killed during the treatment phase are floating down river, collecting in Lake Sinissippi. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) employees and volunteers are working to remove those fish to control the odor and unsightliness.

The DNR has already installed a carp trap on the east branch of the Rock River near the Greenhead boat landing. As carp and other fish move upstream from the marsh, they are caught in the trap. Volunteers and employees alike will remove all the fish too, returning the game fish to the marsh. The USFWS is working toward building a similar trap for the west branch of the Rock River near the auto tour route.

Plans include stocking the marsh with game fish. Some restocking has already occurred because of a potential winter kill due to low oxygen levels in Rush Lake, located about 20 miles north of Waupun. The fish had to be rescued from the lake quickly to minimize the die-off. In early February, employees and volunteers began netting northern pike and perch from Rush Lake. Within two weeks, over 2,700 pike averaging 20" in length and 225,000 perch and minnows, averaging about 3" in size, were removed and placed into the east and west branches of the Rock River immediately upstream of Horicon Marsh. In addition, over 100,000 game and forage fingerlings will be obtained from a USFWS hatchery this spring and placed into the marsh.



Jack Bartholmai

### Group Determination

After two years of planning, the Horicon Marsh Management Committee, comprised of DNR, USFWS, and local citizens, determined that a carp eradication project using chemicals throughout the Horicon Marsh was necessary (phase one of the whole project).

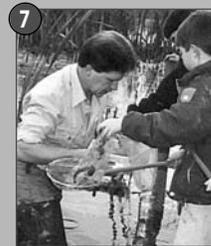
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Winter-killed carp at Rush Lake

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Jack Bartholmai

*We still had some trumpeter swans to watch.*

by Diane Penttila, Wildlife Biologist

**Alive and Free-Flying!**

It could be a sadder story, and we certainly would like to tell you a happier tale. To the best of our knowledge, ten of the twelve swans released at Horicon Marsh in May 1998 are alive and free-flying birds. However, several of the birds have not been seen for several months. There have been problems with tame swans, and only one bird out of the remaining 10 returned to the release site. However, the trumpeter swan recovery program in Wisconsin is a huge success, and there is still hope for trumpeters to become established as a nesting species at Horicon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

**Making Friends**

Of the ten swans released at Horicon NWR, only one returned last spring, and we had to re-capture him. **Swan E95**, a male, returned on March 2, 1999 during a warm spell. Despite cold temperatures and snow after his arrival, he stayed in the area of the hiking trail parking lot on Highway 49 and hanging out on private lands north of the refuge. Quite approachable, he also started to become too friendly, following landowners and hanging out in school yards in Oakfield. When he returned to the refuge hiking trails on March 11, he started approaching hikers in the parking lot and following them on their hike. Not the kind of behavior we wanted to see in our swans as it would only be a matter of

time before he started living on handouts and losing any of his wild nature. Plus he was at risk for being hit by a car, because he seemed unafraid of vehicles. He was recaptured on March 12 and brought to a wildlife rehabilitator in Antigo, Wisconsin where the male swan from the Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area was recovering from lead poisoning. Both swans were feather clipped and re-released in a remote northern flowage, away from people. But once the swans grew their flight feathers back, they moved to the lakes near Three Lakes, WI in Oneida County where once again they became too friendly. Those two swans became the most-reported swans of the fall season in 1999 in the whole state.

**And now, the rest of the story**

The mate of **E95** was **X03** (the bird Governor Thompson released). She spent the winter in Batavia, Illinois. A bit on the friendly side, she took handouts from bird feeders at a wild bird store. She was picked up, her health checked, found to be healthy, and released back in Batavia. In the spring 1999, she flew back to Pewaukee into the General Electric ponds where our swans were captive-reared for their first two years. She paired with a new male (who was recovering from a wing injury while living in the wild in St. Croix County), and the two of them were released in June at Meadow Valley Wildlife Area. They were seen in September in a cranberry marsh near Mather, WI.

**Avid Travelers**

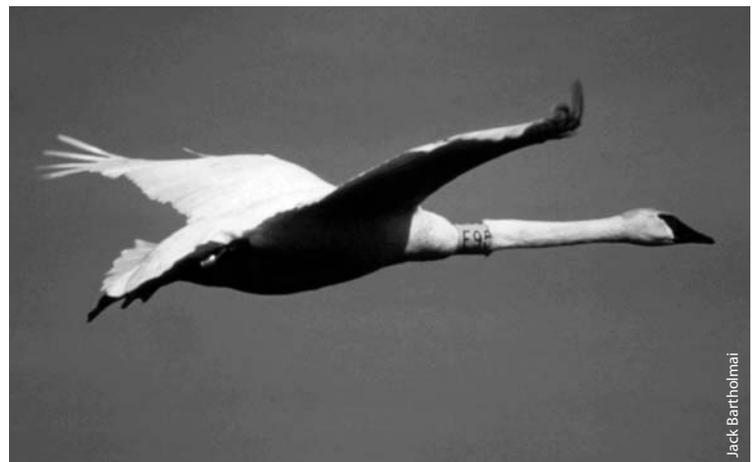
Neither bird from the pair **X32** and **X22** have been seen since December 1998. The male **X21** was found dead from lead poisoning in February, 1999. His mate, **X10**, was captured and found to have extremely high levels of lead. She survived and was kept at the Pewaukee General Electric ponds as captive breeding stock. Swan **X24** had been recaptured in October 1998 because her secondary wing feathers did not develop after clipping. A health reason could not be determined, and she was returned to the Pewaukee General Electric rearing facility. She could still fly well enough to disappear from there and was not seen again. Her mate, **X25**, stayed at Horicon NWR until December 1998 but also has not been seen since. **E89**, a male, did some traveling up and down the state like a yo-yo. He was first seen on March 10, 1999 on Lake Wausau with two other swans, one from Wisconsin the other from Michigan.

Five days later he was seen with the same swans near the WI/MI border in Vilas County. On March 31 he was alone on Wolf Lake in Fond du Lac County, on Lake Winnebago on April 3, on private property in Fond du Lac County on May 13, and visited Sheboygan and DePere for the summer. He also became too tame, was recaptured and relocated to Crex Meadows in August where he was last seen in September 1999. His mate, **X30**, was first seen in Green Lake County on June 2, 1999 and last seen in October 1999 paired with an Iowa bird in Jefferson County.

**A Happy Ending**

To give a happy ending to the Horicon NWR Trumpeter Swan story, two wild trumpeter swans showed up behind the office on June 21, 1999 on their own. They did not wear neck collars, so their origin is not known, but they do wear leg bands. They appeared to be one year old birds as they still had grey feathers

*Continued on page 3*



Jack Bartholmai

## Addition and Improved Roads Slated for 2000-01

By Patti Meyers, Refuge Manager

Design plans are nearly complete for the new environmental education (EE) room being added to the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. The EE room will be hexagon-shaped and about 60' long. Windows will span the western walls for a view of Horicon Marsh, and high ceilings with exposed wood beams will provide an expansive and rustic look.

### Accommodate 150 People

The addition will contain seating to accommodate up to 150 people. A pull-down, large screen will be used for videos and slide presentations. We will eventually equip the room with electrical components necessary for distance learning opportunities.

The EE room will be accessed through a corridor extending north from the existing visitor center. We will make minor modifications of the exhibits in the visitor center to accommodate this entryway. The National Wildlife Refuge System map will be relocated to the western wall to replace the quilt, which will be moved the new EE room.

### Completed By Fall

Construction should begin by early summer and be completed before the

busy fall season. We anticipate this added space will provide better accessibility and more effective environmental education programming for large groups, special events, and public meetings. The \$184,000 cost for this addition comes from Title V federal funds to meet accessibility and safety needs in public buildings.

### Complete Road Renovation

Also watch for construction on refuge roads as they get an improved look. The 3.2 mile auto tour route and the 3/4-mile visitor center entrance road (Headquarters Road) will undergo complete renovation in 2001 or possibly later this year. Watch your local media for updates, or if necessary call our office. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service engineers in our Minneapolis regional office plan for the complete removal of all old asphalt, restoration of underlying base, and placement of new asphalt. The federal Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21) funds will pay for this \$550,000 project.

### Celebrate The Completion

We apologize for any inconvenience these construction activities may cause you and hope you will join us in celebrating their completion later in the year. ▶



The new floating boardwalk will be officially dedicated on April 25.



The visitor center addition will be located on the north end of the building. The ramp for the deck will be removed.

in their wings. They finally settled in an impoundment in the southeast corner of the refuge (sometimes visible from the Rockvale Road overlook) and stayed until December 1999. Of course we are hoping that they will return, and trumpeters have already been seen on the refuge this spring. If they are only two years old, they may not nest yet, even though they are old enough. Most swans wait until they are three or four years old to reproduce for the first time. So there is still hope that we will have a breeding pair of trumpeter swans soon. Plus, the state of Wisconsin has surpassed its recovery goal for this endangered

species. Who knows ... if these two birds found the marsh, perhaps other trumpeters will too.

### Graceful and Majestic

We need your help to ensure the survival of these graceful, majestic birds. If you see trumpeter swans, remember to keep your distance, for your safety and for their protection. Nesting trumpeters are highly territorial and may attack people who come too close for their comfort. Use binoculars to get a closer look without disturbing them, and as always, please report your trumpeter swan sightings to us. ▶

## SPECIAL REFUGE SIGHTINGS!



American white pelicans again attempted to nest on isolated islands on the refuge last year. Their attempts were mysteriously unsuccessful.

## Restoring The Prairie

by Wendy Woyczik, Biological Technician

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff who work with the Leopold Wetland Management District (District) make a special effort to restore native prairie throughout the eastern one-third of Wisconsin. This special effort to restore native prairie makes Schoenberg Marsh Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) in Columbia County our spotlight for this issue.

### Schoenberg Marsh WPA

The Leopold Wetland Management District, in cooperation with the Wisconsin Private Lands Office in Madison, has begun efforts to re-establish local Wisconsin genotype native grasses and forbs on the Schoenberg Marsh WPA. Sixty-five acres of the WPA were planted with Wisconsin native genotype seed, some of which was collected approximately 10 miles from the WPA at the Goose Pond Sanctuary owned by the Madison Audubon Society. Ten grass species were planted with big bluestem, Indian grass, and wild rye dominating the mix, while 77 forbs were planted with prairie dock, cup plant, and rosinweed dominating the mix. These native plantings will be used for production seedbeds. The seed harvested from these beds will provide native grass

and forb varieties to be planted on other WPAs. This will save the District thousands of dollars annually on seed costs, improve the diversity of the mixes used in our seeding program, provide an ever increasing amount of local genotype seed for harvest, and finally help to perpetuate the historic genetic strains of these native grasses and forbs.

### History

Schoenberg Marsh WPA is comprised of 10 tracts with the first tract being purchased in 1974. This WPA is currently 605 acres in size, making it the fourth largest WPA in the District.

Schoenberg Marsh WPA is a natural wetland depression classified as a Type IV marsh. A Type IV marsh is defined as having standing water depths of between six inches and three or more feet during the growing season. This marsh type is dominated by herbaceous emergent, floating, and submergent vegetation, such as cattails, bulrush, water-lily, pondweed, and coontail. With an adequate water supply, this WPA is an excellent marsh for waterfowl use.

Prior to U. S. Fish and Wildlife ownership, the land around the marsh

produced corn, marsh hay, and soybeans. Fortunately for the marsh, no tiles or ditches were used to drain the fields which allowed the landscape to evolve naturally.

The 65 acres of Schoenberg WPA are small in comparison to the historic Arlington Prairie which covered portions of Dane and Columbia Counties and included the Schoenberg Marsh WPA. In a quote from Lieutenant D. Ruggles (1835) where he writes about the prairies around Fort Winnebago (Portage) in Columbia County, we can envision the vastness of the prairies; "In some instances, the prairies are found stretching for miles around, without a tree or shrub...those called the 'rolling prairies', appear in undulation upon undulation, as far as the eye can reach..." These restored prairies not only provide nesting habitat for waterfowl but also provide nesting and cover for grassland birds, pheasants, and other wildlife.

### Valuable Prairie Landscape

WPAs are also important because they restore lost and valuable prairie landscapes. Of the approximately 9.5 million acres of oak savanna and prairie that Wisconsin hosted just 150 short years ago, only one-half of one

percent (less than 10,000 acres) of the prairie remains, and less than one-tenth of one percent (less than 1,000 acres) of the oak savannas remains. Prairies and oak savannas were once the largest ecosystem in North America, but today are much rarer than wetland habitats. (About 50% of Wisconsin's wetlands have been destroyed since European settlement.)

### Additional Information

Schoenberg WPA is located 3.5 miles south of Wyocena on State Highway 22, then 1.5 miles east on Hall Road.

WPAs are open to public hunting, trapping and fishing. All federal and state laws apply, except in areas posted with Closed to Public Hunting signs.

All WPAs are open to wildlife observation, hiking, cross-country skiing, nature study, and photography. Firearms are permitted only while engaged in hunting during established open seasons.

For a complete listing of WPAs managed by the Leopold Wetland Management District, call Biologist Jim Lutes, who will mail you a brochure. 920-387-0336, ext. 20. ➤

## A Very Special Hunt

by Diane Kitchen, Assistant Refuge Manager

One of my favorite programs on the Refuge is the special hunt that we administer for hunters with disabilities. I love this program because it is a neat thing to do and every hunter who participates is so nice and so grateful for the opportunity. Many hunters return year after year. About half of the hunters have been back every year since the hunt was started in 1994. And I am glad that I can still include them. So far, I have been able to accommodate all of the hunters who apply, but someday I may have to have a random drawing.

A 600-acre area around the office is reserved for this special hunt during the deer gun season. Interested hunters send in an application each year. Each hunter is allowed to have a partner, who is also allowed to

hunt. Some partners choose not to hunt and strictly assist. About 10 hunters and their partners participate each year. Each hunter is assigned a two-day time period during the nine day season.

What is a disabled hunter? The rule that we use is that they must have a Class A, B, or C permit from the Department of Natural Resources. These special permits require a fairly strict application form that a doctor must review and sign. We offer an accessible blind for hunters in wheelchairs, although some choose to hunt from their vehicle. Some of the hunters have a difficult time walking and may even have a prosthesis. One of the hunters is blind and with his brother assisting has been successful in harvesting a



*Clyde Campbell from Brown Deer, WI, harvested this 190 lb., 14-point buck, (with 19.2 inch spread) in 1995 during the hunt for hunters with disabilities.*

deer. Some hunters have heart or lung ailments and do not look visibly disabled. I cringe when I hear others say but he does not look disabled. It's an unfair statement that makes assumptions.

Success rates each year since 1994 have been 58%, 65%, 61%, 5%, 36%, and 15%. The 5% in 1997 was not surprising. Very few deer were seen that year and success was down

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### Another Banner Year

By Jim Lutes, Wildlife Biologist

This past field season marked the sixth year of the District and proved to be one of the most productive yet.

#### 800 Acres

Leopold staff lit up the first prescribed burn on April 9 and completed the main portion of the burn season by April 29. In those twenty days we burned over 800 acres on 14 separate burns!

Combined, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) and Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) programs seeded over 525 acres of native grasses and forbs on private lands and WPAs after the spring burn season.

#### Native Genotype Seedbeds

One of the biggest highlights of the seeding season was the establishment of 65 acres of native Wisconsin genotype seedbeds on Schoenberg Marsh WPA in Columbia County. (See related article on page 4.)

In the PFW program, the totals for 1999 are the third highest in wetland acres restored (230.1) and the fifth highest in the number of sites restored (104) since the program got started in 1988.

#### Setting Another Record!

Another record was set when 90 rare orchids were found to be growing on WPAs, the highest number ever recorded since organized searches began. Biological technician Wendy Woyczik and the volunteers from the Garden Club of America, Partners for Plants, complete orchid surveys on one of the Winnebago county WPAs. They search for the federally threatened, state endangered eastern prairie white-fringed orchid. We believe that two things helped the orchid population increase:

- A combination of annual prescribed burning to control reed canary grass, which chokes out the orchid and many other plants, and
- Water level management to provide the plants with the most favorable growing conditions.

In any case, we plan to continue orchid research and management to keep the numbers of these beautiful plants on the rise.

Finally, as 1999 came to a close, the totals for the land acquisition program came rolling in. The District purchased eight tracts of land totaling over 970 acres of

upland and wetland.

One of these acquisitions called Baraboo River WPA, just outside of Portage, is over 850 acres in size. This WPA is in the floodplain of the Baraboo River and for years was drained and farmed. The restoration of this WPA will involve the completion of a Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) contract that will restore the majority of the WPA to wetland (WRP is a wetland restoration program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service). The remainder of the property will be seeded to native grasses and forbs. A beautiful addition to the District!

#### Forever Content

Throw in: seedings to be mowed, fences to be removed, parking lots to be built and maintained, noxious weeds to be controlled, boundaries to be posted, administrative issues to be dealt with, meetings to attend, brochures to update, and so on. You may just get the idea that this little staff of six here at Leopold WMD keeps busy year around, and you are right. But would we want it any other way? Of course not! ➤

## PROPOSED ALDO LEOPOLD NWR UPDATE

### New ideas for the Fairfield Marsh

By Steve Lenz, Project Manager

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has decided to suspend action on a final environmental assessment in order to provide the opportunity for exploration of new ideas for restoration and conservation of the Fairfield Marsh (proposed Aldo Leopold National Wildlife Refuge). The Service is expecting a report from a group of stakeholders by the end of the current fiscal year, September 30, 2000.

Interested parties such as local landowners, the International Crane Foundation, the Aldo Leopold Foundation, the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association,

and other groups have come together to explore how and to what degree the valuable historic marsh area can be restored and conserved for future generations.

The Service released a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) in August 1999 evaluating several alternatives for the proposed Aldo Leopold National Wildlife Refuge in the Fairfield Marsh area of Sauk and Columbia Counties. During the EA comment period, it was suggested that an approach with more involvement by private landowners might be the preferred way to protect and restore the area.

"I heard the community talk about a desire to develop new ideas about how to protect and restore the former marsh area by working more with private landowners," said Bill Hartwig, Regional Director of the Service's Great Lakes/Big Rivers region. A personal responsibility for natural resource conservation is integral to Aldo Leopold's land ethic philosophy.

We want to support this unique initiative shown by local interests in exploring ways for landowners to play a more active role in resource preservation in the

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## Discover one of hunting's best-kept secrets

More than 30 million Americans who visit national wildlife refuges each year already know about the tremendous opportunities to enjoy wildlife on these public lands. For others, these natural treasures remain one of America's best-kept secrets.

The vast network of prime habitats making up the National Wildlife Refuge System provides havens for wildlife, but also special places for people. Wildlife observation and photography, fishing, hunting, and environmental education and interpretation are available on many national wildlife refuges.

With more than 500 national wildlife refuges and thousands of small prairie wetland areas across the United States, chances are there's one near you.

For more information on your National Wildlife Refuge System, call 1-800-344-WILD.

**AMERICA'S NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES...**

*Where wildlife comes naturally!*



# Jackie Buggs, Sharing Her Love For the Natural World

By Molly Stoddard, Ranger

*What do maggots, the talented and gifted program at Mayville High School, and duck paintings have in common?*

Let me introduce you to Jackie Buggs. Jackie volunteers at the refuge in a variety of jobs and last year worked almost 200 hours. She decided to volunteer because she “wanted to get involved in a lot of stuff in the marsh. I had a natural interest to see what you guys do,” she explained.

## Maintaining Bluebird Boxes

She is the first person ever to monitor and maintain our bluebird nesting boxes. Unattended for years, many fell into disrepair. Working with refuge biological technician Jon Krapfl, Jackie located, mapped, numbered, and repaired 32 boxes. She visited each box weekly from March through summer and added new boxes and predator guards around the posts. She cleaned out the boxes, removed unwanted nests and eggs of house sparrows, picked off maggots from beneath nestlings wings, and recorded data for each box so tracking can be maintained year after year.

Jackie often recruited her brother, sister, or cousin to join her as she made the rounds from box to box, as well as one of her teachers, Dan Rambo. As a crew, they worked almost 200 hours last year—120 of those hours were Jackie’s! In addition, she worked with Jon to develop a brand new computer database to track this information. She is actively searching for a new volunteer to take over the bluebird boxes once she moves on to college this fall. She would like to see “more community involvement in the refuge, more Mayville High School students volunteering here.”

Jackie was instrumental in helping refuge staff conduct the whooping crane food study last summer. Again, she recruited the help of family and friends. Jackie worked more than 40 hours, in chest waders and muck, collecting invertebrates and minnows from numerous traps, plus counting, identifying, preserving, and shipping specimens to the lab for research.

## Always Learning

Jackie dabbled in the fine art of duck banding and counting cranes. She helped refuge staff band 398 mallard ducks. Along with 120 other volunteers (a new record!), Jackie helped count 446 sandhill cranes on 59 sites in Dodge County for the annual sandhill crane count. “It is great to see a high schooler volunteer at the refuge,” commented Jon. “Jackie always answered our pleas for help with a ‘sure’ or ‘I guess I can’ not knowing what we were getting her into.”

## World Renowned!

Born in Milwaukee, Jackie’s family moved to Mayville in 1992. Now a senior in the talented and gifted program at the high school, Jackie has completed a number of interesting art projects. She painted a mural of the rainforest in the high school stairwell which is almost three stories tall.

Jackie has entered and placed each year in the Wisconsin Junior Duck Stamp contest. Shown here with all of the local winners! (1999)



Bill Holmes



Rebecca Reidner

Making the rounds from box to box!



Jack Bartholmai

Jon Krapfl, Diane Penttila, and Jackie found 13 pelican nests and 15 eggs total.

Her work on the refuge is often an inspiration for her artwork. Over the last year she maintained a field notebook and will submit it in a contest sponsored by the American Birding Association. Her artwork has been displayed at the Seippel Homestead for the Arts in Beaver Dam and has toured statewide as part of the Junior Duck Stamp contest display. That tour includes a stop at our visitor center during the Horicon Marsh Bird Festival (Mother’s Day weekend). She also has artwork on tour in China through the International Crane Foundation.

## A Love For Life

Jack Bartholmai recently reflected on Jackie’s work and experience: “I had the pleasure of getting to know Jackie Buggs over the past year not only as a fellow volunteer at the Horicon NWR, but also through her interests in birding, wildlife photography, and wildlife art. Her love of life and exceptional knowledge of the natural world are reflected in her prolific works of art, which include sketching,

painting wildlife photography, and carving. Jackie is independent and self-motivated, shows an insatiable quest for knowledge, is enthusiastic in all of her endeavors, and shows an ability to take an efficient, no-nonsense and critical appraisal of situations. I would not be surprised to see her emerge as an outstanding artist, scientist, or a magnificent blending of both.”

## A Bright Future

Jackie plans to pursue a wildlife biology degree at the University of Wisconsin-Steven Point. She says she hopes to someday “work on any refuge but Alaska as a biologist.” Refuge biologist Diane Penttila said, “She will make an outstanding wildlife biologist.” We are so glad Jackie chose to volunteer at the refuge, and we look forward to one more year of working with her. We definitely think she is someone you should know. ➤

*In 1999 the boxes were used by tree swallows and wrens, but with Jackie’s improvements, the bluebirds should return.*



Rebecca Reidner





Bill Holmes

# Jon Krapfl, Refuge Fire Technician

By Diane Kitchen, Assistant Manager

Jon Krapfl, known as J.J. to his family and friends, has an important job on the Refuge because he does a little bit of everything. Officially Jon is the Refuge fire technician, but when he's not writing burn plans, lighting the fire, and monitoring the burns, he's doing everything else. Jon assists with the biological and habitat programs, the maintenance program, and the public use program. Refuge staff have also found Jon's talent with computers an asset. As a result, he also helps out with the Refuge's weather station, global positioning system and geographical information system, all of which are high tech computer-related gadgets used in managing the Refuge.

What does Jon think about all of this variety in his job? Jon says, "The variety of different jobs keeps my job interesting. Being able to do something different every day makes work more fun. There's always something new with the changing seasons too."

### Invaluable Employee

Jon started working on the Refuge during the summer of 1992 as a volunteer. At the time, Jon was attending school at the University of Wisconsin in Green Bay. After graduating with a Bachelors degree in biology and a minor in environmental science in December 1992, Jon was hired at the Refuge in April 1993. Jon has been an invaluable employee ever since.

Born and raised in the Refuge's backyard in Leroy, Wisconsin, along with five brothers and sisters, Jon has enjoyed growing up around the marsh. Jon remembers spending many hours hunting and fishing around the Refuge, adding that he feels pretty lucky to work at a place he enjoyed visiting as a child.

### Always Keeping Busy

When Jon is not working, he enjoys hunting (deer, turkey, pheasant, and rabbit), fishing, trap shooting, archery, ice fishing, shooting sporting clays, biking, golfing, downhill skiing, traveling, sightseeing, and spending time with his many nieces and nephews. Jon recently bought a house in Waupun, so has kept himself quite busy fixing it up.

The next time you see a fire on the Refuge, you can feel confident that an organized plan and team, with Jon in the lead, are behind it. For that matter, the next time you see any project happening on the Refuge, know that Jon probably had something to do with it. ➔



FWS Photo

Jack Bartholmai

# 1999

**248 Volunteers worked over 3,000 HOURS at the refuge.**

**Betty Flesch of Fond du Lac was named VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR.**

**The Beaver Dam Charter School was named the group which worked the most hours: a record of over 1,100 HOURS!**

**Jack Bartholmai worked more hours than any other individual in 1999: 250 HOURS!**



## HORICON NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE THANKS YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

*Thank you to the following groups and people for their special support of the refuge over the last year:*

- The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, particularly staff from the Horicon Service Center, for their outstanding contribution to the carp eradication and re-stocking project on the entire Horicon Marsh.
- Sarah Congdon and Laura Congdon for designing this newsletter and the Fond du Lac Senior Center Hikers for assembling our large mailings, including this one.
- The Midwest Interpretive Association for funding of this newsletter and other public use activities on the refuge.
- Betty Flesch for helping us transition to a new volunteer database software.
- Gayl Zuelsdorf for coordinating the production of the Horicon Marsh Bird Festival booklet.
- Jill Bell's 6th grade class at St. John's Lutheran School in Mayville for field testing the new aMaunk-shak-kah educational program.
- Beaver Dam Head Start for field testing the new Here is the Wetland program.
- Mayville Middle School for their excellent partnership with the refuge, particularly the Earth Club and the 5th and 6th grade classes.
- To all of the Marsh Stewards who have joined our Adopt-a-Site program and contribute their time and effort in cleaning up the Refuge.
- To the Waupun, Mayville, and Horicon Chambers; to the Fond du Lac Visitors and Convention Bureau, and to the Dodge County Tourism Association for promoting the refuge to travelers and neighbors alike.

*With your continued dedication to the marsh and its wildlife, we can make all make a difference to make the refuge a better place!  
Thank you for your involvement.*

## ATTENTION TEACHERS!

# Exciting Educational Programs and Field Trip Experiences!

by Molly Stoddard, Ranger

Bring your group to the refuge this spring to enjoy any number of educational programs and field trip experiences. We can also take the show on the road and come to you for school programs. We also sponsor teacher workshops and in-service programs. For a complete listing, call or email me (molly\_stoddard@fws.gov), and I can mail or fax you a brochure. Here are a few new and expanded programs to try:

### Here is the Wetland

Listen to and add special effects to a story called "Here is the Wetland," enjoy a guided hike on the boardwalk to look for plants and animal from the book, and make a Horicon Marsh floor puzzle. Appropriate for 4 year olds through 3rd graders. 2 hours long. Maximum group size: 40 children.

### Guess Who?

Guess who left the tracks, slides, chewings and other signs behind during an interactive slide show. Touch nests, furs, and feathers! Hike with the ranger to look for wildlife signs using a checklist. Expand your experience for older children by dissecting an owl pellet, identifying what the owl ate, and re-assembling the skeletons to take home. Best for K-5th graders. Slide show, 15-30 minutes long (age-dependent), hike, 1 hour long, owl pellets, 30-45 minutes long. Max. group size: 30.

### Visitor Center Scavenger Hunt

Collect answers to questions about wildlife and the marsh using the exhibits at the visitor center, located on County Z. 4th-8th grades. 30 minutes long. Group size: 30.

### Horicon Marsh Field Trip Guide Activities

Both classroom and field trip activities are available for large and small groups. Fly like the geese, collect and examine macro invertebrates living underwater, enjoy a marsh scavenger hunt, learn how to use binoculars and take them on a guided bird hike—LOTS of possibilities, and they are all found in the field trip guide. The guide is available by attending a teacher workshop on the marsh. It is now also available for sale at our visitor center in Coots Corner for \$12.00 and at the Horicon Service Center. You must have a copy of the guide to participate in these types of activities. 2nd-8th grades. Times vary.

### Horicon Marsh Bird Festival School Field Trip Day

**May 12** Lots of activities marsh-wide, including bird hikes and games on the refuge. Call to sign-up.

### One Bird - Two Habitats Teacher Workshop

**July 14** A wonderful opportunity for middle school teachers to obtain great activities on migratory birds. Held in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, among others. Call Bill Volkert 920-387-7877 for a reservation.

### Lessons in a Land Ethic Teacher Workshop

**August 18** For middle and high school educators, highlighting *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold. Keynote speaker: Nina Leopold Bradley, one of Aldo Leopold's daughters. Held in partnership with the Leopold Education Project and the Central Wisconsin Chapter of Pheasants Forever. Call or email me to sign up.



Jack Bartholmai

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**APRIL 25**  
**EARTH DAY EVENT:**  
**BOARDWALK DEDICATION, 9:00 AM.**



**MAY 12, 13, and 14**  
**HORICON MARSH BIRD FESTIVAL**

Various activities will take place marsh-wide, such as guided tours, hikes, talks, bird banding demonstrations, art displays, and more! Come to the refuge on May 12 for a school field trip day or on May 13 for family activities at the EE Barn and the Junior Duck Stamp reception at the visitor center.

**JUNE, JULY, and AUGUST, WEEKENDS ONLY**  
**OLD MARSH ROAD OPEN**

Enjoy hiking and bicycling on Old 49 during daylight hours only. Adjacent dikes are closed, and dogs must be leashed at all times. Old Marsh Road is closed weekdays.

**SATURDAYS IN SEPTEMBER and OCTOBER**  
**GUIDED BIRD HIKES, 9:00 AM**

A different trail will be used each week depending upon where the birds are, so call to sign-up. Binoculars available for loan, as well as instruction on their use. All ages welcome.

**WEEKEND IN SEPTEMBER THROUGH NOVEMBER 5**  
**VISITOR CENTER OPEN, 9:00AM - 6:00PM**

Enjoy exhibits, souvenirs, a viewing deck with spotting scopes, and a staffed information counter. Also open weekdays, Monday through Friday, 7:30am-4:00pm year round.

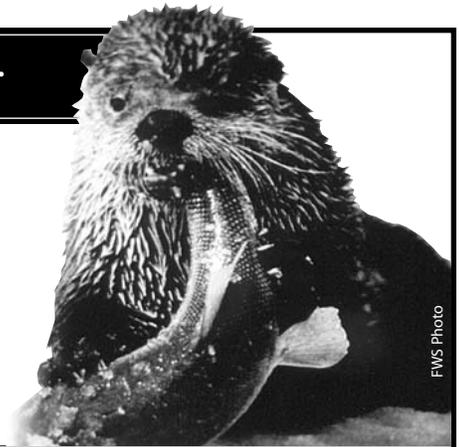
**SATURDAYS FROM SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 28**  
**GOOSE TALKS, 4:00 PM**

*Why do geese fly in a V? Do they mate for life? How about those city geese?* Answers to these questions and others will be revealed. Meet at the Highway 49 viewing area.

**OCTOBER 14**  
**OPEN HOUSE, 9:00AM - 6:00 PM**

Celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week! Slide shows, hikes, talks, free bookmarks, posters, and drawing for prizes. At the visitor center and select locations throughout the refuge.

**FOR DETAILS OR A  
COMPLETE EVENTS LISTING,  
PLEASE CALL 920-387-2658.**



FWS Photo



# River Otters

(*Lutra canadensis*)

By Diane Penttila, Wildlife Biologist

## JANUARY FEBRUARY

Otters are active all winter, fishing under the ice or sliding on snow and ice during thaws. Their fur keeps them warm with a outer coat of coarse guard hairs and a dense, thick undercoat that helps waterproof the animal. Air bubbles trapped in the fur help keep them warm underwater.

## MARCH APRIL

Pregnant otters look for a den to give birth. Otters do not dig their own dens but look for abandoned dens from other animals, such as muskrats. Litter size is usually two or three pups each averaging five ounces. Pups are born blind and helpless. The male is driven away shortly after the female gives birth but is allowed to come back later to help care for the young.

## MAY

Not long after birth, otters enter their breeding stage. Females breed for the first time at two to three years of age while males do not breed until they are six. Like many members of the weasel family, females go through a process called delayed implantation. The embryos lie dormant in the uterus for several months receiving only sparse energy to stay alive. The embryos do not begin to develop until late fall or early winter.

## JUNE JULY

Pups venture out of the den where their mother teaches them to swim and hunt.

## AUGUST

Pups are weaned. They will grow to an average of 20 pounds with males weighing more than females. They will be about two and one-half feet long including the tail.

## AUGUST SEPTEMBER

The family will leave the den site and move to areas with abundant prey if needed. Fish is the main food source, but they will also eat crayfish, frogs, turtles, aquatic invertebrates, and an occasional bird, rodent, or rabbit. Prey is captured by mouth by catching critters in their hiding places or in pursuit. Excellent swimmers, otters have webbed feet, short legs, a streamlined body, and serpentine swimming action. However, they are most successful catching slow fish; thus much of their diet consists of rough fish such as carp.

During the day, otters use their vision to catch prey. They have a transparent eyelid that closes when they submerge. At night or in turbid waters, otters use their stiff sensitive whiskers to help locate and capture prey. Their ears and nostrils are small and can be closed underwater. During a dive, otters can slow their pulse rate to one-tenth of their normal rate which conserves oxygen, allowing them to dive for as long as eight minutes.

## OCTOBER

Young otters can survive on their own but will stay with their parents until they are almost one year old. After that they will disperse to find their own hunting and foraging areas. River otters are somewhat territorial but generally practice mutual avoidance between groups. Other than the family groups, bachelor groups may form with a combination of sex and ages. This flexibility allows otters to exploit seasonal food concentrations such as fish spawning.

## NOVEMBER DECEMBER

With the right kind of ice and snow it is possible to see otter tracks and slides. Rough knobs on the otter's hind feet provide good traction on ice, and the same streamlined body that allows them to swim well also allows otters to slide well on ice, snow, and mud. Some of the play sliding and other antics that otters are so well known for may be recreation, especially by young otters, but some of it serves to strengthen social bonds, to scent mark, or to practice hunting techniques.

Otters are becoming more common on Horicon National Wildlife Refuge and are protected from trapping harvest. Still, consider yourself lucky if you actually see one. Although curious about people, they tend to be sensitive to disturbance and difficult to locate for viewing. If you should see otters, remain still, hope that you are standing upwind from them, and watch them swim and play. Often groups will pass from one impoundment to another, sometimes back and forth, other times stopping on the dike to look you over. They may submerge underwater then come up farther away to get a safer look. So if they disappear, keep looking for them. As always, bring binoculars with you to get a closer look while minimizing your disturbance to wildlife.



Kasha Christopherson



Jack Bartholmai



Jack Bartholmai

Continued from page 1



Rotene drip barrel.

It was decided to treat the Horicon NWR initially, followed by treatment of the Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area (Horicon Marsh SWA).

### Team Work

Over 40 people were needed the first day of treatment. Crews convened on January 18th to place 55-gallon drums in strategic locations on the Horicon NWR. These drip barrels were filled with rotenone that slowly dripped into flowing waters and tributaries. The barrels ran for eight to 32 hours. Simultaneously, crews drilled holes through the ice with augers and injected rotenone into the water. Fortunately, because of the earlier drawdown of the marsh, much of the Horicon NWR had

little or no water, so we used less chemical and finished in less time than originally expected.

The entire procedure was repeated on the Horicon Marsh SWA, except less injecting was required, and more drip barrels were used than on the northern part of the marsh. The process was so well planned and staffed that the operation went smoothly and quickly.

The total cost of the supplies and chemical was \$51,385.24. Total hours of planning, preparation, and treatment on both the federal and state lands was 5,594 hours.

### Benefiting Wildlife and People

All of these measures are part of the fish management plan, using an integrated carp management approach. We realize that carp cannot be totally removed from the Horicon Marsh ecosystem, but we aim to maintain the carp population at a lower, more manageable level. Carp eradication, the first step of the carp management plan, was a resounding success. In spite of some obstacles, carp treatments, restocking, and spot treatments will continue to be part of a regular maintenance plan for the marsh. We will continue to work with the DNR and the Marsh Management Committee in returning the Horicon Marsh to a healthy ecosystem that will benefit wildlife and people. ➤



*Carp eradication on the Marsh includes restocking, which began in February. Pike and perch were netted at Rush Lake and released in the Rock River. The entire carp project has been closely followed by the media and was even broadcast on CNN.*

Photos by Jack Bartholmai

## A VERY SPECIAL HUNT, CONT.

Continued from page 4

everywhere. Overall, a total of 24 does and 16 bucks have been harvested by 107 hunters for a 37% success rate. But does success really mean harvesting a deer? I imagine if you ask some of these hunters what it means to them, they would say it's the opportunity to be able to hunt again despite a disability. It is nice to get that deer, but is it not more important to have the chance to get that deer?

Last of all, I want to share with you one reason that this hunt is so special to me. In 1997, I received a letter from the wife of one of my hunters from a previous year. She wrote, "Dear Diane, you were so special to Ray and I a year ago November when he hunted for the last time around headquarters. Ray died November 17, 1996. We would have



*celebrated our 50th on May 30th if he were still with me. Once again, I want to thank you for making his last year of deer hunting so special."* That letter certainly tugged at my heart when I received it. By the way, Ray shot a doe that year.

I am glad that we have a program at the Refuge that can actually make a difference in a person's life, and I am especially glad to be part of it! ➤

## NEW IDEAS FOR THE FAIRFIELD MARSH, CONT.

Continued from page 5

Fairfield Marsh area. To accommodate this concept, the stakeholder group will meet and report their suggestions this year.

In February 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service introduced a proposal to conduct a feasibility study for the establishment of a new national wildlife refuge.

In the State of Wisconsin, we have lost 99% of our original, pre-settlement prairies and oak savannas, resulting in severely declining populations of grassland birds such as the bobolink, eastern meadowlark and the northern harrier (or marsh hawk). We have also lost nearly 50% of our original wetlands from housing developments, highway construction, agricultural drainage and groundwater reductions. Sauk County alone has lost about 95% of its pre-settlement wetlands.

Fortunately, more of us understand today the valuable role that wetlands play in ecology by providing a host of direct benefits to humans. These benefits include acting as natural filters for pollution and reducing flooding. If restored, the wet meadow and open water habitat of Fairfield Marsh would provide feeding and nesting habitat for waterfowl such as mallards, blue-winged teal and gadwalls. Wading birds such as great blue herons and egrets would gain sufficient areas to rest and feed. The loggerhead shrike, dickcissel, bobolink and eastern meadowlark are a few of the grassland dependent birds that would benefit. ➤

**For more information about the proposed Aldo Leopold NWR, please visit the web site at:**

**<http://www.fws.gov/r3pao/planning>**

# Purple Aliens Sited at the Refuge

By Diane Penttila, Wildlife Biologist

Purple loosestrife, pretty flower or noxious weed? It's both. Purple loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*, is an exotic perennial plant from Europe that is invading and degrading wetland habitats all across North America. It replaces native plant species and provides very little habitat or food for most wetland wildlife species. Chemical and mechanical means, such as pulling or mowing, to eliminate loosestrife are usually unsuccessful. It sure is pretty, but it has got to go.

## Lost Habitat

Horicon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) has over 80 acres of thick stands of loosestrife which does not sound like much, but that is 80 acres of habitat lost for wildlife. That is not counting the thousands of single or small clumps of loosestrife scattered throughout the refuge that could easily one day become several more acres of dense stands of loosestrife.



Caution: Purple loosestrife blooms in summer, shown here with cattails.

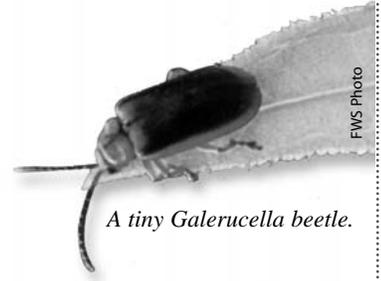
## Big appetites!

So how do we beat this invader? Doubt we can beat it but we can

compete with it. Say hello to *Galerucella pusilla* and *Galerucella calmariensis*. These beetles are another exotic from Europe. They are two of four species that have been brought to North America to combat loosestrife. All of them feed exclusively on purple loosestrife. Tiny *Galerucella* beetles are leaf eaters with big appetites.

This will be our third and maybe last year rearing these beetles in captivity and releasing them on the refuge. If field production continues to improve, then future years may only require collecting and redistributing in the field instead of hand rearing.

1999 was a good year for rearing the beetles with abundant production on the release sites during the summer. We observed an obvious decline in seeding and robustness of the purple loosestrife plants at these two sites. We were not expecting to see such a decline in loosestrife for a few more years.



A tiny *Galerucella* beetle.

Hand or captive rearing includes using up to 150 potted loosestrife plants each year as rearing plants and future food sources for the beetles. Either individually netted plants or a custom-built tent houses the pots and contains the beetles. Each year we have overwintered our stock beetles in the refrigerator or right in their pots where cooler temperatures force dormancy but do not kill the little buggers.

## Working Together

From meager beginnings, many partners worked together to get this project off the ground. We received our first beetles in 1996 from the University of Minnesota, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Cornell University. We shared our beetles with Waupun High School, the DNR in Madison and Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area (SWA), as well as the Leopold Wetland Management District. The District released beetles for the first time on Johnstown Waterfowl Production Area in Rock County. 🦋

	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>NO. OF BEETLES RECEIVED</b>	1,850			
<b>NO. USED AS BREEDING STOCK</b>	180	546	1,300	800
<b>NO. OF BEETLES REARED</b>	2,500	45,000	33,000	48,500
<b>NO. OF RELEASE SITES ON REFUGE</b>	2	2	3	4
<b>NO. RELEASED ON REFUGE</b>	2,700	35,000	23,500	32,000
<b>NO. RELEASED ON HORICON SWA</b>	1,000	7,000	9,000	10,600
<b>NO. RELEASED ON LEOPOLD WMD</b>				5,000

## SPECIAL REFUGE SIGHTINGS!



Jack

## BLACK NECKED STILTS Welcome to Horicon

Last summer, Holly Bartholmai of Beaver Dam first sighted black necked stilts south of Hwy 49. The pair successfully reared 5 young! This species has never been known to nest in Wisconsin before. Hooray for Holly and for Horicon Marsh!

## PATTI MEYERS HONORED

Refuge Manager Patti Meyers was honored at the annual Ducks Unlimited Convention on January 22. Patti was the recipient of the Ducks Unlimited Conservation Partner of the Year Award for 1999. She has worked with Ducks Unlimited on numerous projects including the Radke Pool and Main Dike Restorations this past year.

# KIDS!

## Recipe for a Wildlife Refuge in Your Own Backyard

- Start with a source of **food** - like a blueberry bush just for the birds, or flowering plants that will attract butterflies.
- Add a splash of **water** - a bird bath will do!
- Mix in several portions of **cover** - such as shrubs for birds to roost in, or brush piles, where small mammals can make their home.
- Blend mixture with plenty of **places to raise young** - install a simple nesting box or provide a milkweed plant for the monarch butterflies.
- Season to taste with generous helpings of **enthusiasm, fun, and a love of nature**. Then sit back and enjoy the results!

Send us a photograph of your wildlife refuge! You may see your backyard in our next newsletter!

